

Guyana elections: Foreign Secretary's statement, 17 July 2020

Press release

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab statement on the elections in Guyana, which took place over 4 months ago.



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

It has been over 4 months since elections in Guyana – no electorate should have to wait that long for a result. The UK is disappointed by the ongoing attempts to frustrate the will of the people. The Caribbean Community scrutinised recount cleared the way to declare a legitimate result. That should now happen.

Any government sworn in on the basis of non-credible results will face strong international condemnation and consequences – we have started the process of putting those consequences in place. The UK pays tribute to the patience displayed by the people of Guyana during this challenging time.

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For journalists

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Audiences back in theatres from 1 August

- Pilots underway ahead of opening up of indoor performance venues ☐

Audiences adhering to social distancing will be able to return to indoor theatres, music and performance venues from 1 August, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced today.

The announcement marks a major step in getting the arts and cultural sectors fully back up and running, and follows the government's announcement of £1.57 billion of funding for the arts, culture and heritage sector earlier this month, the biggest ever one off investment in these industries.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is working with the sector on pilots of performances with socially distanced audiences that will inform final guidance for venues in the run up to August 1. These include the London Symphony Orchestra at St Luke's, London with a variety of further events in the coming weeks.

This announcement marks the move to stage 4 of the government's 5-stage roadmap for the return of professional performing arts. Under the new regime, audiences, performers and venues will be expected to maintain social distancing at all times.

Guidance for the performing arts, published earlier this month, also sets out further measures to support the safe return of audiences, including:

- Reduced venue capacity and limited ticket sales to ensure social distancing can be maintained☐
- Tickets will be purchased online and venues encouraged to use e-tickets to reduce contact and help with track and trace☐
- Venues should have clearly communicated social distancing marking in place in areas where queues form and adopt a limited entry approach☐
- Increased deep cleaning of auditoriums☐
- Performances should be scheduled to allow sufficient time to undertake deep cleaning before the next audience arrives☐
- Performers, conductors, musicians must observe social distancing wherever possible☐

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

The UK's performing arts sector is renowned across the world and I am pleased that we are making real progress in getting its doors reopened to the public with social distancing. From August indoor theatres, music venues and performance spaces will safely welcome audiences back across the country.

This is a welcome step in the path to a return to normal and, coupled with our £1.57 billion rescue package, will help secure the future of this important sector.

Notes to editors:

Read the [full guidance](#) and further details of the [£1.57 billion rescue package](#).

Singing and the playing of brass and wind instruments in groups or in front of an audience is still currently limited to professionals only.

This guidance will be for organisations in England. Organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should adhere to the advice of the devolved administrations at all times.

This guidance will be updated as the evidence develops around singing, wind and brass instruments, and the wider public health context. The five stages of the phased return to professional performing arts is as follows:

- Stage One – Rehearsal and training (no audiences and adhering to social distancing guidelines)□
- Stage Two – Performances for broadcast and recording purposes (adhering to social distancing guidelines)□
- Stage Three – Performances outdoors with an audience plus pilots for indoor performances with a limited distance audience from July 11. We will now also work with the sector to get small pilots started as soon as possible and will set out further details in due course
- Stage Four – Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (but with a limited distanced audience indoors)□
- Stage Five – Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)□

[River Severn partnership secures over £40m boost for flood defence](#)

The government announcement, which included £200 million for innovative projects and £170 million for accelerated flood defence schemes, comes as welcome news to the partnership and its ambition to make the Severn river network the most vibrant and resilient in Britain.

The River Severn Partnership, formed in September 2019, brings together the Environment Agency, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, Severn Trent Water, Water Resources West, Natural Resources Wales, wildlife trusts and others to establish a strategy for adapting to climate change and to

improve resilience across an area which covers the Rivers Severn, Teme, Warwickshire Avon and the Wye.

Around £35 million will be used to accelerate delivery of schemes to manage flood risk, including Tenbury Wells, an additional £5.4 million to undertake carbon offsetting, resulting in significant tree planting and improving habitats and green spaces for local people along the river network.

Alongside scheme delivery a further £1.5 million was secured by the Partnership in recognition of the innovative action it is seeking to take to build resilience. The Partnership has been chosen as one of four nationally to trial and develop new ways of planning ahead and making wise investment choices based on the long term uncertainties brought by climate change. The hope is that this will provide a strong basis for the Partnership to bid into the wider £200 million Innovative Resilience Programme which will be available later this year.

Joint chairs for the River Severn Partnership, Mike Grimes from the Environment Agency and Mark Barrow from Shropshire Council said:

The river network impacts on us all and is fundamentally the one thing that binds us all together. We recognise the unique role of this river network as a wonderful natural asset and yet it also poses us with significant challenges such as flooding and drought. As a group of organisations, we recognise that we need a new truly joined up approach and are pleased that Government supports our vision.

The Partnership is working to finalise an investment plan setting out the long term vision and programme, with an ambition to be a national showcase on how to deliver sustainable and resilient growth and drive forward economic recovery.

[Pilots announced for return of spectators to elite sports events](#)

The Government has announced that a small number of sporting events will be used to pilot the safe return of spectators through late July and early August – with a view to reopen competition venues for sports fans, with social distancing measures in place, from October 2020.

The events have been carefully selected to represent a range of sports and indoor and outdoor spectator environments. They are expected to include two men's county cricket friendly matches – such as Surrey v Middlesex at The

Oval on 26-27 July – the World Snooker Championship at Sheffield’s Crucible Theatre from 31 July, and the Glorious Goodwood horse racing festival on 1 August. There are also likely to be further pilot events for other sports, in order to build up to and prepare for the full, socially distanced return of sporting events from 1 October 2020.

The pilot events will provide the opportunity to stress-test the Government’s ‘[stage five](#)’ guidance, on the return of fans to elite sports events.

The guidance has been developed with UK Sport and in close consultation with the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Public Health England, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, Police and medical representatives across Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports governing bodies.

It is designed for competition delivery partners and venue operators and marks the final piece of Government guidance for the resumption of elite sport. The guidance will outline the conditions, facilities and processes that will need to be implemented for the safe return of spectators to competitive sporting events, including tight restrictions on numbers in the short-term.

Further guidance outlining the licensing obligations for sports stadia and how venue operators must calculate safe capacities in line with social distancing restrictions will be published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority..

It marks the latest phase of the Government’s measured approach around the return of elite sport, under carefully controlled conditions.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

For months millions of us have felt the void of being unable to go to the match to support our team or attend a top-class sporting event. So I am pleased that we are now able to move forward with a plan to help venues safely reopen their doors to fans.

I recognise that not every sport, team or club has the benefit of huge commercial revenue, and it is often their dedicated fans that are the lifeblood which helps keep them going. By working closely with sports and medical experts, these pilots will help ensure the safe return of fans to stadia.

Although it will remain some time before venues are full to capacity, this is a major step in the right direction for the resumption of live spectator sport across the country.

The stage five guidance makes clear that the following operating standards must be in place for spectators until further notice:

- Prior to any ticket purchase, competition delivery partners should provide spectators with information on the steps being implemented to

minimise the risk of COVID-19, including any modifications being made to the venue.

- Spectators must agree to a new code of behaviour obliging them to take full responsibility for themselves and others by not attending if they have any symptoms or have potentially been exposed to someone with COVID-19. * Anyone attending an event will also be advised to consider if they are putting themselves at higher risk because of their general state of health or any other risk factors.
- Carefully controlled bookings should be in place, so that social distancing is observed in seating arrangements, alongside a minimising of the numbers of tickets sold to a predefined safe capacity, in accordance with regulator guidance.
- Spectators must be supported to avoid public transport, including through parking facilities, bike and walking routes. However a transport management plan with local and national providers should be in place to increase service frequency, where needed.
- A crowd management plan should be in place, incorporating the controlled entry and exit of spectators (including staggering entry times), and one-way systems inside the venue to maintain social distancing and minimise the risk of crowding.
- Additional hygiene facilities, such as hand washing and sanitiser stations, should be provided, particularly at entry and exit points to the competition venue and in seating/standing areas.
- Screens or barriers should be used to separate people from each other when social distancing cannot be maintained for catering and retail, such as buying programmes and merchandise, or betting.
- Signage and floor markings should be developed both inside and outside competition venues to enforce social distancing, seating plans, one-way systems and queuing requirements.
- Spectator medical requirements should be considered, such as additional isolation rooms, and screening when entering the competition venue.

Sports venues have been closed to spectators since lockdown measures were implemented on 23 March 2020. However in recent weeks certain elite sports have resumed behind closed doors, such as Premier League and Championship football, international cricket and horse racing.

This latest announcement is part of the Government's carefully-designed package to ease the burdens of lockdown in a way that is expected to keep the R rate, the average number of secondary infections produced by 1 infected person, down. The phased approach is outlined in the Prime Minister's roadmap for easing lockdown.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has published a range of guidance in relation to elite sport over recent weeks.

On 13 May '[stage one](#)' guidance was published, outlining conditions for a return to individual performance training at official elite training venues

while maintaining social distancing from teammates and other people outside their households. This included safeguards such as the deep cleaning of facilities and the screening of athletes and staff for coronavirus symptoms before they can enter the training venue by an appropriately trained healthcare professional.

On 25 May, DCMS published '[stage two](#)' guidance, outlining the conditions for elite athletes to resume competitive, close contact training at official elite training venues, so that players could get match fit under carefully controlled medical conditions.

On 30 May, DCMS published '[stage three](#)' guidance – the conditions for elite athletes and professional sportsmen and women to resume competitive sport behind closed doors safely in England from 1 June. This opened the door for the first domestic live action in almost three months.

On 5 July the Culture Secretary announced he had brokered agreements with sports authorities and event organisers to allow a limited number of international sporting events to be exempt from border health measures and get underway this summer, with strong public health protections in place. This was followed by [stage four](#) guidance, which outlines the conditions, facilities and processes that will need to be implemented for all cross-border sporting competition to take place behind closed doors, being published on 7 July.

Further updates to the stage five guidance may be published to reflect the result of the test events before competition with spectators is permitted. Competition Delivery Partners (the Competition Organiser and the Competition Venue Operator) should periodically check gov.uk for further updates.

Sport is a devolved matter and this guidance is applicable to elite sports in England. Those in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should refer to guidance from the devolved administrations.

[PM statement on coronavirus: 17 July 2020](#)

Good morning,

In the two weeks since I last addressed you from this podium, I am pleased to report that we have continued to make steady progress in our collective effort to beat the coronavirus.

For 3 weeks now, the number of new cases identified through testing each day has been below 1,000.

The latest SAGE advice is that, across the UK, the R rate remains between 0.7 and 0.9.

SAGE also assess that the number of infections is shrinking by between 5 and 1 per cent every day.

The latest ONS data shows prevalence and new infections to be stable and low.

The number of patients newly admitted to hospital with coronavirus each day, and the number of coronavirus patients in mechanical ventilation beds, have both fallen by more than 90% from their peak in early April.

And while we mourn every death, the average daily death rate continues, steadily, to fall.

This progress is testament to the phenomenal efforts of our NHS and social care staff working tirelessly on the frontline.

And it has only been possible thanks to the character and fortitude with which you, the British people, have made fundamental changes to the way you all live and work.

When we set out our plan to rebuild on 11 May, we said our goal was to return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and as fairly as possible, in a way that is safe and continues to protect our NHS.

That goal remains the same – but the tools we use to achieve it are changing.

At the start of the pandemic, when we knew far less about the nature and spread of the virus, we had to take blanket, national measures.

National lockdown was undoubtedly the right thing to do and has saved many thousands of lives.

Now however, we know more about the virus – we understand the epidemiology better and our intelligence on where it is spreading is vastly improved.

That means we can control it through targeted, local action instead.

In England, this work is led by NHS Test and Trace and within it the Joint Biosecurity Centre. My sincere thanks go to Dido Harding who oversees this work and who joins me today.

This approach is already working.

In Weston-super-Mare and Kirklees, we took swift and successful action to contain outbreaks at specific premises.

In Bradford and Blackburn with Darwen, we identified troubling trends in the data and worked closely with the respective local authorities to increase testing and take targeted action. That work continues.

And in Leicester, we instituted a local lockdown in order to bear down on

stubborn rates of infection. As the Health Secretary announced last night, we will begin to relax the restrictions there next week. We can do so because the data is improving – with the percentage of people testing positive falling from a weekly rate of 12.2% on 29 June to 4.8% yesterday.

The approach varies in different parts of the UK, but all parts of the UK benefit from the support of our armed forces, additional testing facilities, and billions of pounds of support provided by this Government.

Today we are publishing our framework for containing and controlling future outbreaks in England, which will enable national and local government to work closely together.

From tomorrow, local authorities will have new powers in their areas. They will be able to close specific premises, shut public outdoor spaces, and cancel events. These powers will enable local authorities to act more quickly in response to outbreaks, where speed is paramount.

Action by local councils will not always be sufficient. So next week we will publish draft regulations which clearly set out how central government can intervene more effectively at a local level.

Where justified by the evidence, ministers will be able to close whole sectors or types of premises in an area, introduce local “stay at home” orders, prevent people entering or leaving defined areas, reduce the maximum size of gatherings beyond national rules, or restrict transport systems serving local areas.

I know that it will be hard going for people affected by these local measures. It isn't easy, and for some it may seem unjust that people just a short distance away can live their lives closer to normal.

But it has to be right that we take local action in response to local outbreaks – there is no point shutting down a city in one part of the country to contain an outbreak in another part of the country.

Now of course, this local approach relies on having an effective testing regime in place.

And here we have made substantial progress.

Antigen test capacity – that's the test which tells you if you currently have the virus – has increased 100-fold since the start of March, from fewer than 2,000 tests a day to more than 200,000 tests a day now.

Publicly available data suggests we are now carrying out our tests more than anywhere else in Europe in total, and more tests than Germany, France, Italy and Spain per capita.

We have set up testing sites around the UK and now have 200 mobile units which can be rapidly deployed wherever they are needed.

It is now the case, and has been for some time, that anyone, anywhere in the

UK with symptoms can get a test without delay. We are also testing increasing numbers of people who don't have symptoms but who are at higher risk.

As we approach winter, we will need to go further – not least as many more people will show Covid-like symptoms as a result of seasonal illnesses, and therefore require a test.

So we will further increase testing capacity to at least half a million antigen tests a day – 3.5 million antigen tests a week – by the end of October.

Demand for testing is not the only challenge that winter will bring.

It is possible that the virus will be more virulent in the winter months – and it is certain that the NHS will face the usual, annual winter pressures.

We have taken a number of steps therefore to get the NHS ready for winter.

We have massively increased the number of ventilators available to patients across the UK – up from 9,000 before the pandemic to nearly 30,000 now.

We have substantially increased the pipeline of personal protective equipment for the NHS and social care -constituting over 30 billion items of PPE over the course of the pandemic.

We will be rolling out the biggest ever flu vaccination programme in the history of the U.K.

And we will also of course give the NHS the resources it needs.

And today, I can confirm that we are providing an additional £3 billion of funding to the NHS in England to get ready for winter. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will also receive additional funds.

This will allow the NHS to continue to use the extra hospital capacity acquired from the independent sector and also to maintain the Nightingale hospitals until the end of March.

This new funding comes on top of the additional £30 billion of funding for health and social care that we have already announced this year.

So we are making sure we are ready for winter, and planning for the worst.

But even as we plan for the worst, I strongly believe we should also hope for the best.

That means looking ahead with optimism – now extending our plan to lift the remaining national measures which have restricted our lives since March so we can get back to something closer to normal life.

Now I must stress, the timetable I am about to set out is conditional. It is contingent on every one of us staying alert and acting responsibly. It relies on our continued success in controlling the virus. And we will not proceed if

doing so risks a second peak that would overwhelm the NHS.

Nonetheless, it is important to give people hope and to give business confidence.

So in England, from today we are making clear that anybody may use public transport, while of course encouraging people to consider alternative means of transport where they are available.

From 25 July, we have already committed to reopening the indoor gyms, pools and other sports facilities.

From 1 August, we will update our advice on going to work.

Instead of government telling people to work from home, we are going to give employers more discretion, and ask them to make decisions about how their staff can work safely.

That could mean of course continuing to work from home, which is one way of working safely and which has worked for many employers and employees.

Or it could mean making workplaces safe by following Covid Secure guidelines. Whatever employers decide, they should consult closely with their employees, and only ask people to return to their place of work if it is safe.

As we reopen our society and economy, it's right that we give employers more discretion while continuing to ensure employees are kept safe.

Also from 1 August, we will reopen most remaining leisure settings, namely bowling, skating rinks and casinos, and we will enable all close contact services such as beauticians to resume.

Nightclubs and soft play areas will sadly need to remain closed for now – although this will be kept under review.

We will restart indoor performances to a live audience, subject to the success of pilots, and we will also pilot larger gatherings in venues like sports stadia, with a view to wider reopening in the Autumn.

We will also allow wedding receptions for up to 30 people.

All of these measures for 1 August should be done in a Covid Secure way.

In September, schools, nurseries and colleges will be open for all children and young people on a full-time basis, as planned.

And universities are also working to reopen as fully as possible.

From October, we intend to bring back audiences in stadia and to allow conferences and other business events to recommence – again, these changes must be done in a Covid Secure way, subject to the successful outcome of pilots.

Throughout this period, we will look to allow more close contact between

friends and family when we can.

It is my strong and sincere hope that we will be able to review the outstanding restrictions and allow a more significant return to normality from November at the earliest – possibly in time for Christmas.

At all times, we will continue to work with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to support and care for those at risk, wherever they live in the UK.

We have said that the shielding programme for those most at risk in England, the clinically extremely vulnerable, will be paused at the end of this month. We will stay constantly vigilant and be sure to restart shielding at any point if required.

Now I know some will say this plan is too optimistic, that the risks are too great and that we won't overcome the virus in time.

And of course, if they are right in saying that, and we cannot exclude that they are, let me reassure them, and reassure you: that we will not hesitate at any stage to put on the brakes.

From May 11 onwards, this plan has been conditional, and it remains conditional.

But if we continue to pull together as we have done so far, I know we can beat this virus.

Hoping for the best, but planning for the worst – and it's in that spirit that we must carry on waging this long, hard fight against Coronavirus.

I'll now hand over to Dido.